

Application No. 09/992,469
Amendment dated July 26, 2004
Reply to Office Action of March 26, 2004

REMARKS

Claims 9-26 are pending. Claims 9-20 and 22 are allowed. Accordingly, claims 21 and 23-26 are at issue.

Claims 21 and 23-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102 (b) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,614,151 to Shadle.

The rejection, as it may apply to the claims presented herein, is respectfully traversed.

Claim 21 is directed to a bundle gripping apparatus including a bundle gripping unit having a lower support with a predetermined length for fitting under a bundle to be transported, and an upper clamp head having an upper retracted position spaced from the bundle and a lower advanced position for tightly engaging an upper surface of the bundle to clamp the bundle between the clamp head and lower support thereunder. As amended, claim 21 calls for a universal pivot mount of the clamp head that allows the advanced clamp head to pivot and self-adjust for keeping the clamp head in flush engagement with the bundle upper surface despite sloping of the upper surface. A drive for the clamp head linearly shifts the clamp head between the retracted and advanced positions thereof substantially normal to the length of the lower support. It is submitted that Shadle lacks both the universal pivot mount and clamp head drive as recited in amended claim 21.

In the '151 patent to Shadle, a pickup frame 14 is disclosed as being lowered and raised relative to an overhead-type gantry or crane for picking up anode blocks 11. A rigid backing plate 24 depends from a cross channel 23 at one end, and a drive means 43 including a toggle joint 44, hydraulic cylinder 70, pivot links 45 and 56 and pivot arm 27 are provided to shift a gripping element 26 against a flat side of the anode block pushing the other side of the anode block against the plate 24. Accordingly, the arrangement of the elements of the pickup frame 14 is substantially different from that claim for the bundle gripping unit in claim 21 as the anode block 11 is gripped from its sides, and thus the frame 14 does not include a lower support and an upper clamp head, as recited in claim 21.

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In addition, the gripping element 26 includes a gripping plate 32 that is pivot-mounted to pivot arm 27 by bracket 33 and pin 34. Accordingly, the gripping plate 32 only pivots about a single pivot axis defined by the pin 34, unlike the recited universal pivot mount for the clamp head that allows universal clamp head pivoting. Further, the drive means 43 is operable to advance the plate 32 into engagement with the side of the anode block so that it travels at an oblique angle relative to the backing plate 24. This is in contrast to the recited drive for the clamp head that linearly shifts the clamp head between retracted and advanced positions substantially normal to the length of the lower support, as set forth in amended claim 21. Accordingly, it is believed that claim 21, and claims 23-26 which depend cognately therefrom, are allowable over Shadle.

Based on the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of claims 21 and 23-26 are respectfully submitted.

Respectfully submitted,

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